

MASIPHUMELELE

Award-winning library

JUNE ALEXANDER

Librarian, Fish Hoek Library

News reached us that at the end of 2005 Masiphumelele Library won the award for the most community-involved public library in the Western Cape. To the staff, Friends and all other parties involved our warmest congratulations on this wonderful achievement. It is indeed a very special award and we felt it prudent to publish June Alexander's nomination.

As is the case with all competitions, there can, alas, only be one winner, so to the many other committed and dedicated libraries and staff - see you on the podium next year.

In 1994 an informal library service was started when Jean Williams, former librarian of Oceanview and now director of Biblionef, provided donated books to the public from the boot of her car. Since then the service has just grown and moved to the school. In 1996 a small library was established by Jean Alexander and Sue Alexander (librarians at Fish Hoek Library) in a farmhouse owned by the municipality. After the library burnt down, money was eventually set aside to build a new library. When council funds were withdrawn, John and Carol Thompson, funders from America, stepped in and took over the project with the assurance that the Fish Hoek Library would run and oversee the operation of the library.

The library opened its doors in 2003. It was initially run with books from local and overseas donors followed by the Provincial Library allocation. The donors funded an extension which was completed in 2004. The library doubled in size with an activity room upstairs. Additional funding was secured from Levi Strauss to ensure that

the Masiphumelele Library could be open every day including Saturdays.

Librarians Thando Melamane (in charge), Veronica Mashiyi, Pam Mpame, Thandi Ndabeni and Nokwezi Tetana, along with volunteers provide a comprehensive service to the community.

The library offers free Internet access, story-telling, holiday programmes, computer literacy, film shows, reading programmes, nursery school visits, tutoring scholars especially matrics and visits to

the local nursery schools. Workshops are run by the library and outside people providing skills and training, for example, Khanya Khwezi Project.

Staff are prepared to go the extra mile and I would like to commend them. In particular, Veronica Mashiyi, who volunteered to open the activity room as a study area from 18:00 to 20:00 every night to provide a quiet place for the matrics to study.

As the community lacked a library facility, Fish Hoek Library took responsibility for ensuring the success of the programme. Masiphumelele people were trained and jobs created for them at the library where they have excelled. Children, in particular, benefit from the library and various programmes

are attracting adults. Volunteers from the Fish Hoek community also pass on their skills to this community by teaching, reading and running workshops.

The library has a fenced green park with benches and playground equipment where young and old can enjoy themselves - generously provided by John and Carol Thompson.

I would therefore like to nominate the Masiphumelele Library for the most community-involved public library, supported by a great team.



Top: Veronica Mashiyi and Thando Melamane from Masiphumelele at the award ceremony

Above: Pam Mpame (left) and Thando Melamane from Masiphumelele attended the Library Week launch at Bridgetown Library where special mention was made of their achievement